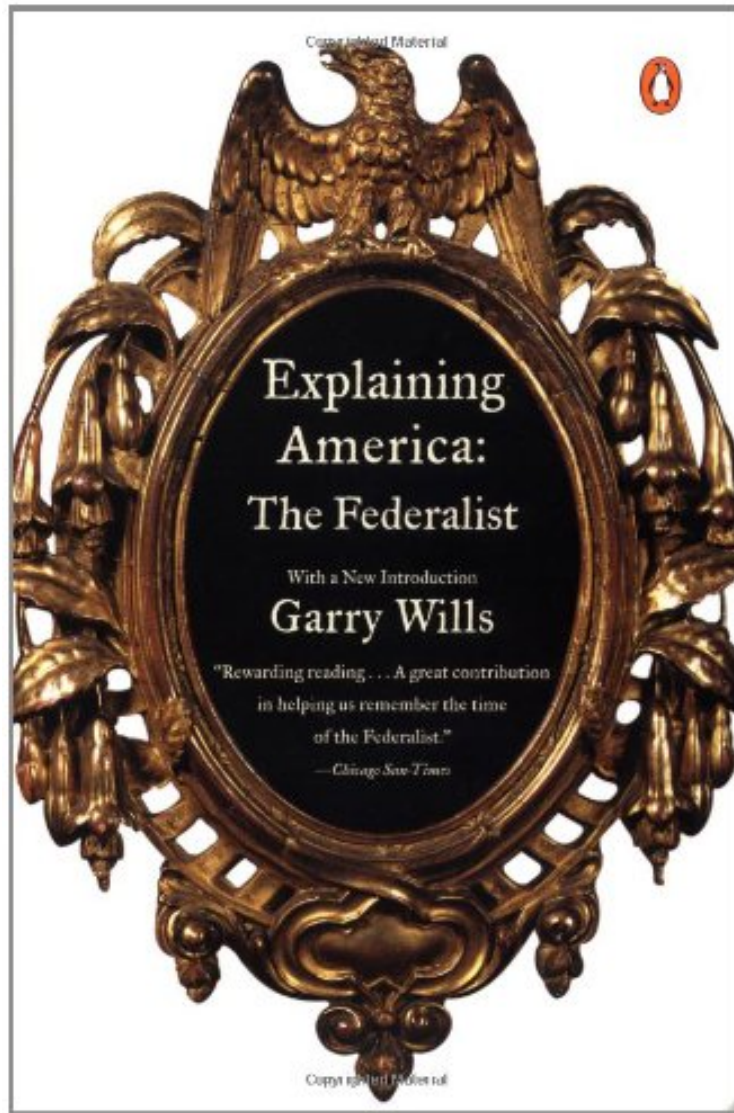


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## Explaining America: The Federalist

Garry Wills

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**Garry Wills : Explaining America: The Federalist** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Explaining America: The Federalist:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Revision of the Articles of ConfederationBy Clara G. ThomasGarry Willis', Explaining America: The Federalist interprets the federalist essays and events steering the construction and ratification of the constitution to illuminate post-revolution America, and the influences that led its framers, for the good of society, to revise the original intent of the colonies and trade liberty for protected nationalism.0 of 0 people

found the following review helpful. "Explaining America: The Federalist" By Constance Stephens I am still reading Explaining America: The Federalist 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Marvel of Mental Energy By Ricardo Mio Surprising what a good education will do, and having the right tutor at the right time to shape the course of that education. Tutoring was a product of the Scottish Enlightenment, and Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison were each tutored by Scottish teachers at the age of sixteen. Indeed, much of the curriculum they were taught in college was based on the writings of Scottish philosophers, such as David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Lord Kames, Thomas Reid, and Adam Smith. Garry Wills, the author of Explaining American: The Federalist reveals just how influential the Scottish Enlightenment was on the Founding Fathers, notably Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, the primary writers of The Federalist. The base-element of 18th-century Scottish philosophy was reason, not dogma. The Scots were certainly men of religious faith, as were Hamilton and Madison, yet remarkably free of religious dogma. Reason was their North Star. Hamilton and Madison were practical men looking for practical means of making government effective while at the same time serving at the behest of the people. The two became fast friends serving in the Confederation Congress, and were equally disturbed with the national governments ineffectiveness under the Articles of Confederation. Hamilton called for a convention in Philadelphia to revise the Articles, and Madison led that convention in dispensing with the Articles and writing a new Constitution. To become law, the Constitution needed to be ratified by nine of the 13 states. Two of the most obstinate states blocking ratification happened to be the home states of Hamilton (New York) and Madison (Virginia). New York presented the greater opposition, and since Madison was in New York finishing up his term in Congress, Hamilton asked him and John Jay, a fellow New Yorker, to mount a newspaper campaign that focused on the objections being raised by New York Anti-Federalists. The three authors would remain anonymous, and write under the name of Publius. As it turned out, Jay fell ill and wrote but five of the essays. The Federalist essays were published in four of the five New York newspapers. The eighty-five essays are, according to Wills, a marvel of mental energy. He writes: Two men turned out seventy-one of these essays in just over six months (the run of papers from No. 6 through No. 77, minus Jays one contribution in this span) essays as trenchant in thought as they are graceful in expression. Hamilton, the begetter of the whole scheme, was lightning fast with his quill, assuming a dizzying variety of classical names. No one, on either side of the Atlantic, turned out more pamphlets of high quality than Hamilton. But in The Federalist he outdid himself. And Madison, slower to write and speak, drew on the deep reserves of learning acquired in preparation for the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. . . . As Douglas Adair notes (Fame, 53), the great project went forward, for half a year, at an average of a thousand well-chosen words every day. It is enough to make all other writers on politics despair. Publius" didn't merely defend the Constitution against the Anti-Federalists' claims that the new government would swallow up the states, that too much power was given to it, and that the Articles of Confederation could with some tinkering still be made to work. Publius explained in detail exactly how the new Federal government would work. Indeed, The Federalist papers would serve as the Federal governments operating manual, with a series of essays devoted to specific subjects: quantity of powers, separation of powers, the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Executive Department, the Judiciary Department, and so on. The most famous essay is No. 10, written by Madison but heavily influenced by David Hume, concerning the delicate issue of majority rule vis-a-vis the rights of the minority. Wills devotes a good deal of space to Madison's famous essay, particularly in how it's been interpreted down the through the years, by historians and writers such as Charles Beard, Robert Dahl, Douglas Adair, and James McGregor Burns. It's a fascinating debate, with Wills having the final word, and alone is reason enough to read the book. Wills examines Hamilton and Madison, their upbringing and college education steeped in the classics, and their heavy reliance on the writings of Scottish philosophers for many of their political and economic ideas, and how, at this juncture in their careers, they thought very much alike. There was a bit of Scotland in each of them: Hamilton's father was born in Scotland, and Madison's very thinking had a Scottish accent from the start." Part One is entitled The Hamiltonian Madison; Part Two, The Madisonian Hamilton. Wills account of these two men is fascinating and quite insightful. Part Three is devoted to checks and balances; the closing section, Part Four, to representation. The Federalist failed of its purpose, since the majority of delegates elected to the New York ratifying convention were opposed to ratification (events at the convention would change their minds). Nonetheless, the Federalist lives on as perhaps the greatest example of political journalism in the English language, and is still referred to by public figures, and often cited in the decisions of the Supreme Court. Bottom line: Wills book is scholarly but not overly so; he's writing for the mass market, but careful reading is recommended. Five stars.

Look out for a new book from Garry Wills, What The Qur'an Meant, coming fall 2017. Now with a new introduction--award-winning historian Garry Wills's definitive analysis of the Federalist Papers In 1787 and 1788, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison published what remains perhaps the greatest example of political journalism in the English language--the Federalist Papers. Written to urge ratification of the Constitution, the eighty-five essays--trenchant in thought and graceful in expression--defended the Constitution not merely as a theoretical statement but as a practical instrument of rule. Now updated with a new introduction, Garry Wills's classic study subjects these essays to rigorous analysis, illuminating, as only he can, their significance in the development of the philosophy on which our

government is based.

"Rewarding reading . . . A great contribution in helping us remember the time of the Federalist."--Chicago Sun-Times  
"To read the Federalist afresh, as Wills has done, is to have hope renewed."--The New Republic  
About the Author  
Garry Wills is a historian and the author of the New York Times bestsellers *What Jesus Meant*, *Papal Sin*, *Why I Am a Catholic*, and *Why Priests?*, among others. A frequent contributor to the *New York Times* and other publications, Wills is a Pulitzer Prize winner and a professor emeritus at Northwestern University. He lives in Evanston, Illinois.  
From *The Washington Post*  
A virtuoso exercise in scholarship.